

Tips for Answering Author's Purpose and Perspective Questions

Questions about the author's purpose ask you to determine **why an author wrote a particular passage**. For example, an author might write a passage in order to persuade an audience, describe something, explain a process, define a term, refute a claim, analyze a text, or convey personal feelings.

Understanding the **author's tone**—his or her attitude toward the subject and audience—will help you understand the purpose and the author's perspective. Authors convey purpose and perspective through their choice of words and the impression those words create. Author's purpose questions will usually include one of the following key words: *author's purpose, reason, why, the passage can best be described as*. You may also be asked to identify the *tone* of the passage or the *perspective* of the author based on his or her words.

Author's purpose answer options often incorporate the following vocabulary words: **analyze, compare, contrast, critique, evaluate, examine, investigate, characterize, define, depict, describe, explain, identify, introduce, narrate, recount, summarize, acknowledge, advocate, assert, promote, propose, support, condemn, criticize, oppose**.

Familiarize yourself with the subtle distinctions in meaning among these various words. For instance, to describe is to trace out or give a pictorial account of, to explain is to make clear or to give a reason for, and to analyze is to examine in detail.

Strategies for Answering Author's Purpose Questions:

- *Look for key words that identify the question as an author's purpose question.* If the question includes any of the author's purpose key words listed above, make a note that you are looking for the author's purpose – the reason the author wrote the passage. This will help you focus on the author's tone as you read, which in turn will help you identify his or her purpose.
- *Read the passage and make notes.* Once you've identified the question as an author's purpose question, read the passage, making note as you read.
- Consider the words an author chooses to use. Word choice is one way authors convey their meaning when they expect the reader to infer that meaning.
- *Consider the vocabulary of your answer options.* Is the author really *analyzing* something, or is she *describing* it? Use your knowledge of key vocabulary words to eliminate wrong answers and identify the better answer.

